



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fairbanks

Fish & Wildlife Field Office

Humpback and Broad Whitefish Research

Humpback and broad whitefish are an important subsistence resource throughout the Yukon River drainage. They are actively harvested for human consumption and are also taken to feed dogs. They are generally abundant, at least seasonally, where ever they are found. Despite their widespread harvest and use by many people in rural areas of the state, relatively little is known about their life history. Knowledge of spawning and rearing areas are few, and documentation of migration patterns are similarly sparse.

Recently, rural communities in the upper Tanana River, Alatna, Allakaket, and Selawik have expressed concerns over the long-term sustainability of the whitefish resources on which they depend. Their concerns about these resources, as presented by their Regional Federal Subsistence Advisory Council, initiated the development of these studies.

It was immediately clear that an understanding of the movement patterns of whitefish in these areas was required before any evaluation of population status could be conducted.

Radio telemetry techniques have been used with great effect to unravel the movement patterns of a wide variety of fishes, and to discover their spawning, feeding and rearing areas. Initial work in the upper Tanana River has shown that the technology can be effectively applied to whitefish species as well.

Following the successful work with humpback whitefish in the upper Tanana River, the Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office initiated additional radio telemetry projects in the upper Koyukuk River and in the Selawik River to identify movement patterns and areas of population importance to whitefish species in these regions as well.



Broad Whitefish
Coregonus nasus



Humpback Whitefish
Coregonus pidschian



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